Chapter 13
Living in a Virtual Reality: Anime and Manga Fandom

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ABSTRACT
Anime (animated films) and manga (comic books), fans are easily misunderstood and can even face prejudice. In fact, they are usually not as people see them. As one of the many anime and manga fans, I would like to show people what the real world of the anime and manga fan is like. As the fan population grows, the market increases, so this chapter will also act as a guide for those who are interested in this market. This chapter aims to introduce readers to the world of anime and manga fandom and to its fans, in particular. It will present and explain specific terms such as weeboo, otaku, waifu, husbando, fujoshi, and critic. This chapter will also describe the different characters of anime and manga fans and explain how these characters can affect marketing. Finally, this chapter will look at the current market size of anime and manga fandom and explore how the culture is used in marketing.

INTRODUCTION
Fans have a long history of publishing fan magazines, attending cons, writing fanfic and making fanvids to create and interact together in self-contained bubbles. Since the explosion of the internet, fandom has become a very modern online phenomenon. Fandom draws on popular contexts from all around the world, from media such as Hollywood blockbuster films to local programming such as Afghan Idol, Afghanistan’s adaption of American Idol (Gray et al., 2007).

This chapter aims to introduce readers to the world of anime and manga fandom and explore the marketing implications for this industry. It will present and explain many specific terms used in this fandom. To better understand anime and manga fandom, this chapter will begin with a description of its origins and history.

The chapter will then introduce different types of fans like otaku, fujoshi and waifu and explain their characters in order to better understand them and their behaviours. Finally, this chapter will explore the relationship between anime and manga fandom and consumption and discuss implications for marketing.

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WHAT IS ANIME AND MANGA FANOM?

Why We Need to Know About Fandom

Today, it is normal to see people standing in line waiting for a new product or to meet a celebrity. Or we see groups of people dressed in ‘strange’ cosplay outfits, communicating and hanging out together. Or, on the internet, we can find many virtual communities discussing anime and using words that are not familiar to us. We can easily identify all of these people as fans of something or someone.

Fans and fandom are daily words in modern life. A fan can be described as an enthusiastic follower of something or someone, including films, books, games, celebrities, anime and manga.

Thanks to the internet, fans can now communicate with each other everywhere at any time. The frequency of interactions between fans significantly increases the number and variety of fans’ activities. Because of the internet, fans can communicate faster and with an increasing number of other fans. Before the internet, fans had limited ways to ‘meet’ each other: letters, phones and meeting in real locations. This limited the number of people that could meet, which in turn limited the speed at which fandom could spread. The internet and social media have solved these problems. Fans can now meet and talk to each other in virtual rooms, like Twitter, Facebook and blogs. They can talk to thousands of other fans at once and get feedback in a second. Also, they can attract many new fans at an unbelievable speed.

Being a fan means being a member of a fandom, or subculture. As fandoms spread increasingly faster, fans groups are becoming stronger and larger and fandom is becoming ever more powerful in our daily lives. From a business point of view, fandoms are now a qualified consumer target group and one of the most engaged subcultures in the digital and social space (Netzer, 2016). In other words, fans have become loyal consumers in many industries, such as Apple fans. Having a deep understanding of this kind of consumer target group would help companies to succeed in their markets. One of the best ways to ‘make friends’ with fandoms is to learn about them.

Origins of Fandom

We usually see fans as people who are crazy about something or someone and who spend a lot, maybe too much, time and money on their idols. However, every one of us has our own favourite thing or person. If we extend the meaning of ‘fan’, we are all a fan of something in a variety of perspectives (Fiske, 1992).

In this chapter, ‘fans’ refers to more specific groups. These groups have more passion, more emotion and more action than others. The fans in these groups are obsessed with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV programme or band and they can produce reams of information about them and quote their favourite lines or lyrics, chapter and verse (Hills, 2002). For example, true fans of the comic Slam Dunk, one of the most famous basketball comics in the world, would know that the words ‘I want to play basketball’ are said by the character Hisashi Mitsui.

Normally, people do not like to be alone, so they find other fans. There are many ways fans can get together to share interests, such as writing fanfic, cosplaying in an event, publishing magazines and interacting on the internet. Through these activities, fans gradually form subcultures of their own. We call these subcultures a ‘fandom’, from the word ‘fan’ with the suffix ‘-dom’ (as in ‘kingdom’).

Considering the fanatic features of all kinds of fans, the first thing that comes to mind would probably be congregation. Looking at history, it is not surprising that the word ‘fandom’ has some relationship with religion. It started with a very old word: ‘fanatic’. Fanatic arose from the Latin word fānāticus, which in
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